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## ROTHBURY RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Rothbury,  
Northumberland.

### MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1949.

Lord Ravensworth, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Area of the Rothbury Rural District is 167,186 acres and the estimated population for 1949 5,680 an addition of two.

The Number of Births Registered was 132, twenty more than in 1948. Of these, 51 came from outside the Rothbury District leaving 81 belonging to it. The birth rate, after deducting these 51 was 14.2 per thousand, the rate for England and Wales being 16.7. There were 4 illegitimate and no still births. At the Coquetdale Cottage Hospital 107 babies were born; compared with 59 the previous year.

The Number of Deaths registered was 77, 59 males and 38 females, giving a rate per thousand of 11.07 compared with 11.9 in 1948. The rate for England and Wales was 11.7.

There were 4 deaths of infants under one year of age, one more than in the previous year. There were no maternal deaths following childbirth, compared with two in 1948. There were no deaths from measles or whooping cough. Nineteen persons died between the ages of 70 and 80, twenty-one between 80 and 90 and one over 90.

There was one case of suicide, one under the Road Traffic Act and 4 from other violent causes.

The Chief causes of Death were:- Heart and other diseases of the circulatory system 28, apoplexy and cerebral thrombosis 8, and cancer 13 - six more than in the previous year.

Infectious Diseases Notified. Number of cases 72, a reduction of 61 from the figures for 1948.

These were classified as follows:-

Whooping Cough	21	Erysipelas	7
Measles	20	Polic -myelitis	1
Scarlet Fever	14	Puerperal pyrexia	1
Pneumonia	8		

Two cases of pneumonia proved fatal.

For the second year in succession no case of diphtheris was notified and there were no cases of food poisoning.

Tuberculosis. It is pleasant to report that only one case was notified during the year, a notable record, the average number notified for the previous five years being 9.1. There were 3 deaths from tuberculosis, one pulmonary and 2 other forms, the rate per 1,000 being 0.51, that for England and Wales being 0.45.

Water Supply, Sewerage and Housing. I am again indebted to the Sanitary Inspector for the following brief report:-

Water Supplies - All supplies under the direct control of the Council were satisfactory during the year despite the extremely dry conditions. The village of Hepple, which is supplied privately, suffered from the drought, and on several occasions the Fire Brigade was called to give assistance. A scheme for a new supply from Hepple Whitefield was prepared by the Council's Engineers, Messrs. Waterhouse and Rounthwaite and submitted to the Ministry of Health. A local Enquiry took place and as a result further investigations were being made. The Council's mains were extended during the year to provide a supply to new houses under construction on sites at Longframlington (10 houses) and at Rothbury (42 houses). The Council supplies 60% of the population Lynmouth Corporation 3% from their main as it passes through the district, and the remainder from wells and springs under private ownership.



Sewerage. No major changes have taken place during the year other than the extension of sewers to serve new housing. Messrs. Waterhouse and Rounthwaite have been instructed to prepare a scheme of sewers and sewage disposal for the village of Whittingham.

Housing. Thirty four houses were completed by the Council and occupied during the year with 46 more under construction.

Commentary. In my annual report last year describing the weather of 1948 I remarked that the year was outstanding for its heavy rainfall, really fine weather being compressed into seven days. In this report I have to state that 1949 was the sunniest and driest for many years; this is quite in accordance with the vagaries of our wonderful climate.

The general health of the district was very satisfactory during the fifth year of peace evasion. The birth rate was maintained and the death rate slightly reduced compared with the year before. The chief causes of death were, as usual, diseases of the heart and blood vessels in increasing numbers. We live in an age of speed, mostly quite unnecessary, of restlessness and excitement and uncertainty, in an age of frustrations, discontent and worry and all of these malign influences strike first at the heart and blood vessels. Is it surprising then, that we hear so frequently of high blood pressure, of thrombosis of the arteries of the heart and brain and of sudden deaths often at a comparatively early age?

We may add to these causes the fact that many men are kinder to their motor engine than to their own hearts.

The most pleasing feature of this report is the fact that only one case of tuberculosis was notified during the year and it may be that the long continued sunshine and the longer hours out of doors were factors in bringing about such a happy result but we can hardly expect it to be repeated. The most serious feature of the report is the rise in the number of deaths from cancer from 7 to 13 why I cannot explain. The food position showed little improvement in quantity or quality. The gustatory attractions of whalemeat and snook did not penetrate into the district, but there was an almost embarrassing supply of cod and kippers. The meat did not appear to have been benefited by the sea voyage. Vegetables and fruit were in ample supply and the same adjective might well be applied to the price thereof.

The increased consumption of milk was the one bright spot in the food picture, and in my opinion milk has been the chief factor in preserving the health of Britain during the post war period.

Medical and chemical research made great strides in 1949. The wider application of penicillin and other new drugs considerably affected the maternal and infantile death rate. These advances are encouraging but there is a long journey yet before the Welfare State is reached, the common cold is still far too common.

A.S. HEDLEY.

July, 1950.